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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3293  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1109  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0979  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1548  
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0040  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2145  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0684

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000130

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, INL  
DUSHANBE FOR DEA  
MOSCOW FOR DEA  
ISLAMABAD FOR DEA  
ANKARA FOR DEA  
AID/W FOR EE/EA (BOB WALLIN)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [IR](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS DISCUSS  
COUNTERING NARCOTICS

REF: A. 07 ASHGABAT 1041  
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0122  
[1](#)C. 07 ASHGABAT 1352  
[1](#)D. 07 ASHGABAT 1344

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: Over dinner on January 9, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa told Ashgabat-based law enforcement donor community members that his meeting with President Berdimuhamedov on January 9 had gone well and that the president had seemed genuinely concerned about Turkmenistan's narcotics problem. Berdimuhamedov had welcomed UNODC's project proposals and had agreed to establish a State Counternarcotics Agency. Donors agreed that high-level interest in combatting narcotics trafficking is increasing, but also concurred that a number of problems remain, including a lack of reliable statistics and reluctance among some officials to acknowledge the seriousness of Turkmenistan's drug problem. END SUMMARY.

ANTONIO MARIA COSTA MEETS WITH BERDIMUHAMEDOV

[1](#)3. (SBU) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa visited Turkmenistan January 9-10 with Jean-Luc Lemahieu, Chief of UNODC's Europe and West/Central Asia Operations. UNODC's Turkmenistan office reported that in a January 9 meeting with President Berdimuhamedov, Costa and Lemahieu laid out a number of project ideas that the president welcomed "in principle," and the two sides agreed to work out the details.

## ELABORATION OF UNODC'S PROPOSALS

¶4. (SBU) Key UNODC proposals included the Caspian Sea Initiative, assistance and guidance for the establishment of a drug control agency in Turkmenistan, and the Turkmenistan Border Initiative. The Caspian Sea Initiative aims to share intelligence and analysis of narcotics trafficking in the Caspian Sea region between a Coordination Analysis Unit in UNODC's Ashgabat office with analysts in Tehran, Tashkent, Moscow, Kabul, and Islamabad (Ref. A). Costa urged the president to establish a State Counternarcotics Agency and reported later that Berdimuhamedov did not blink at the suggestion the Agency would cost \$15 million to fund. (NOTE: As reported Ref. B, the president signed a decree establishing a new State Agency for Combating Narcotics on January 18, and allocated \$14.8 million to fund it. END NOTE.) Through the Turkmenistan Border Initiative, UNODC will work toward increasing the border control agencies' enforcement capacities along Turkmenistan's borders with Iran and Afghanistan.

## MORE INSIGHT FROM THE DONORS' DINNER

¶5. (SBU) Costa told a group of representatives from donor countries and international organizations on January 10 that Berdimuhamedov is completely focused on and committed to fighting drugs. Turkish DCM Tolga Orkun noted Turkey is seeking to assist Turkmenistan's counternarcotics efforts by providing training (Ref. C). Costa replied that Turkmenistan is "demanding training," and said he does not see a desire by Turkmenistan to hide its need for such training. UN Resident Coordinator Richard Young said Berdimuhamedov asked for assistance on law enforcement methodologies.

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## COMBATTING AFGHAN OPIATES

¶6. (SBU) Costa noted the fact that Afghan officers are not allowed to talk with their counterparts across the border is a major impediment to Turkmen-Afghan coordination. According to Costa, dialogue takes place only at the highest levels, and only once a year. Lemahieu urged the OSCE to consider coordinating donor funding, and requested that donors take advantage of UNODC's donors' database on a more consistent basis to coordinate technical assistance.

¶7. (SBU) Lemahieu noted that Afghanistan's drugs are now reaching East Africa. To combat the traffic of Afghan opiates, UNODC unveiled a "Rainbow Strategy" at the Paris Pact meeting in December 2007. The strategy is based on five goals and measures: increase the number of opium-free provinces in Afghanistan, strengthen cross-border counternarcotics cooperation among Afghanistan's neighbors, secure Central Asia's borders through intelligence cooperation and border management, reduce smuggling of precursor chemicals into Afghanistan, and improve security around the Caspian Sea.

## HIGH-LEVEL PARTICIPATION INCREASES IN UNODC EXPERT ROUNDTABLES

¶8. (SBU) Putting in a plug for UNODC's Expert Roundtables, Lemahieu said that participation is increasing both because of the expert level of substantive conversations and because CENTCOM can pay for high-level participants to attend when the Paris Pact organization cannot. He said it is a good sign that both Iran and Turkmenistan -- two countries central to narcotics trafficking -- are sending high-level participants to the meetings. In the future, UNODC aims to increase the roundtables' effectiveness by switching from a focus on "targets" (goals) to "action plans," (concrete activities).

## EU-TACIS RECOMMENDS A PREVENTATIVE STRATEGY

¶9. (SBU) EU-Tacis Advisor Michael Wilson stated that the

economics of narcotics production is simple and lucrative: although the price is not increasing, crop yields are growing. Wilson recommended that donors use a preventative strategy to tackle the narcotics problem, adding that although prevention is more expensive, it is an investment in a country's development.

#### POSSIBLE STOCKPILING OF DRUGS TO CONTROL PRICES

¶10. (SBU) Costa said that he does not agree with the strategy of giving farmers price subsidies for "good" (i.e., food and cotton) crops. According to Costa, the World Bank wants to implement a wheat quality improvement project which would include components such as building silos and improving seed quality. Costa mused that somewhere, some people are stockpiling drug crop yields in order to control prices. It is unlikely that farmers are stockpiling, because they can't afford to sit on their crops -- they need the cash flow and therefore sell immediately. For that reason, experts suspect that the stockpilers are probably traders. The Taliban is also likely involved in stockpiling, perhaps indirectly through sympathetic warlords.

#### INCREASED DRUG PURITY DANGEROUS TO ABUSERS

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¶11. (SBU) Lemahieu remarked that drug prices remain stable worldwide, but purity has significantly increased, putting users at huge risk and resulting in a huge increase in overdoses. Purity of drugs sold in Europe has risen on average from 24 percent to 78 percent.

¶12. (SBU) COMMENT: Narcotics continues to be an area where the Government of Turkmenistan is willing to collaborate with neighbors and donors. Overall, this group felt positive about the direction in which Turkmenistan's counternarcotics effort is headed, but other issues remain, including the lack of reliable statistics and the government's reluctance to explicitly admit the existence of serious problems. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND